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NEWS CONFERENCE

#157

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH PIERRE SALINGER

MARCH 2, 1964

6:20 P.M.

EST

MONDAY

MR. SALINGER: You have the appointment by the President of a group of prominent citizens to a Public Advisory Committee on Trade Negotiations.

You have the proclamation of Pan American Day and Pan American Week, 1964.

I will post the schedule in a few minutes.

Q. What is the total?

MR. SALINGER: How many?

Q. Yes.

MR. SALINGER: I haven't counted them.

Q. Are they meeting this week?

MR. SALINGER: I believe they are meeting here soon, but I think Mr. Moynihan at Trade can tell you where and when.

Q. Any comment on the spy story in the Journal American?

MR. SALINGER: I would say, as a general practise, the White House doesn't comment on intelligence matters. Let me go OFF THE RECORD

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and tell you some of the facts as I know them to guide you in any way you want to be guided. There is a Polish defector with the same name as the name published in the Journal American who came to the United States in 1961. After having been in contact with U. S. intelligence sources in Poland since 1958. He has provided a great deal of information to the U. S. intelligence community and that information has been turned over to the FBI and checked out thoroughly and has, in some cases, resulted in the arrest of important Soviet bloc agents operating against the Western world outside the United States. U. S. intelligence agencies maintain contact with him today. The information in the Journal American story is not consistent with information he has given the U. S. Government.

Q. Is this the first disclosure of this man, Pierre, do you know?

MR. SALINGER: I couldn't say.

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Q. Pierre, this is all off the record. Are you saying anything on the record?

MR. SALINGER: I am saying on the record that the White House doesn't comment on intelligence matters.

Q. Is that background or off the record?

MR. SALINGER: OFF THE RECORD.

Q. Meaning?

MR. SALINGER: It can be used, but not for attribution.

Q. You mean background?

MR. SALINGER: I don't mean background.

Q. Deep background?

MR. SALINGER: That is what the State Department calls deep background. I am only giving you this information in order for you to evaluate the Journal American story.

Q. Can we use this, or is it not attributed?

MR. SALINGER: You cannot attribute it to anybody. It can be used but not attributed.

Q. And they still are in contact with him?

MR. SALINGER: That is what I said.

Q. You can write this on your own authority; is that correct?

MR. SALINGER: That is correct. That is what it boils down to.

Q. When the arrests were made, had it been announced when they were made?

MR. SALINGER: I don't know.

Q. Agencies usually have to use some source.

MR. SALINGER: Then you can't use it. It is as easy as that. If I worked for an agency, I would use it either on this basis, I would say this information either makes the Journal American story worth picking up, or it doesn't make it worth picking up. That is the basis I am giving it to you on.

Q. I am not arguing.

MR. SALINGER: I know, but that is my view on it.

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MORE

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Q. Can you tell us something about the meeting with Wilson?

MR. SALINGER: No. I have nothing to add to what Mr. Wilson said.

Q. Pierre, could you tell us if the President is considering going to New York to attend the funeral of Mrs. Wagner?

MR. SALINGER: Why don't you ask me that question tomorrow morning?

Q. Would you think it would be all right to say it is undecided?

MR. SALINGER: I don't want a story written saying that.

Q. Is there any White House comment?

MR. SALINGER: The President has sent a personal message to Mayor Wagner.

Q. Could you tell us what is in it?

MR. SALINGER: No.

Q. Could you give us anything on the appointment of the District Commissioner?

MR. SALINGER: No.

Q. Do you know when you will be able to?

MR. SALINGER: No. I am sure the press will nominate some other candidates and unnominate them the next day. The President will get around to nominating someone.

Q. Is there a deadline tomorrow?

MR. SALINGER: There is no deadline, he just keeps serving.

Q. There are some reports that Ambassador Lodge may be leaving Viet Nam and that the Administration is shopping around for a successor.

MR. SALINGER: Untrue.

Q. Which part of that?

MR. SALINGER: Both parts.

Q. Was the delay on your briefing attributable to anything we should know about?

MR. SALINGER: No.

Q. Anything out of the ordinary?

MR. SALINGER: No.

Q. Is the President going to Atlantic City on May 9th? That is the new date for the dinner.

MR. SALINGER: As I said this morning I don't have any information on that, but I think it is safe to tell you something about that tomorrow morning.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

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